

METHOD OF AND APPARATUS FOR DECODING AUDIO DATA

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a technology for decoding
5 digital audio data.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Fig. 7 is a block diagram showing a schematic structure
of a conventional audio decoding apparatus. This audio
10 decoding apparatus has the decoding section 1, data buffer
2, and output section 3. The decoding section 1 receives
and decodes a coded digital audio data stream, such as Dolby
AC-3 read from a recording medium of digital audio data,
such as DVD (Digital Video Disc), and outputs PCM audio data.
15 The PCM audio data output from the decoding section 1 are
temporarily stored in the data buffer 2 so as to cope with
synchronization with image information and a fluctuation
in an input bit rate of the digital audio data stream or
the like. The output section 3 receives the PCM audio data
20 from the data buffer 2 and outputs audio serial data to an
D/A (digital/analog) converter or the like or output digital
audio data into a digital audio interface receiver. If the
digital audio data stream has multi-channels, the output
section 3 outputs time series data (PCM audio data) output
25 from the decoding section 1 into a plurality of

digital/analog converters corresponding to respective channels or to a plurality of digital audio interface receivers.

Fig. 8 shows a structure of the PCM audio data output from the decoding section 1, namely, shows a data structure in the case of Dolby AC-3 6-channel output. As shown in Fig. 8, one sample data is comprised of PCM audio data of respective channels to be output at the same time. Namely, since the Dolby AC-3 6-channel adopts 6-channel output, one sample data is composed of six PCM audio data. A plurality of sample data compose an audio frame. A number of sample data (audio frame length) per one audio frame is determined by an audio decoding method, and for example in the case of Dolby AC-3, one audio frame is composed of 1536 sample data.

Incidentally, after being decoded in the decoding section 1, if the PCM audio data which are time-series data are given directly to the output section 3, there arises a problem, mentioned below. Namely, if the attribute of the PCM audio data to be given to the output section 3 changes dynamically, data output from the output section 3 cannot cope with the dynamic change of the attribute. Moreover, after transmission of the digital audio data stream is started, in the case, for example, if an error occurs and the re-synchronizing process is desired to be executed, it

is necessary to initialize all the decoding section 1, the data buffer 2 and the output section 3 and to return to the initial state so as to restart the transmission.

The inventors of this invention have disclosed an audio
5 decoding apparatus in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open
No. 2000-278136 that takes care of this problem. In this
audio decoding apparatus, as shown in Fig. 9, tag data
representing individual attributes are added to respective
PCM audio data. As a result, the output section can cope
10 with a dynamic change of attributes, and the re-synchronizing
process can be executed accurately.

However, in case of the audio decoding apparatus
disclosed in Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No.
2000-278136, memory requirement or bus transmission
15 requirement increases because of the additional the tag data
are added to each of the PCM audio data. For example, if
the PCM audio data are 24 bits and the tag data are 8 bits,
then total PCM audio data becomes 27 Kbytes and total tag
data becomes 9 Kbytes for one audio frame (1 K byte = 1024
20 bytes). Thus, in this example, the total memory requirement
and bus transmission requirement becomes 36 K bytes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide
25 a method of and an apparatus for decoding audio data which

are capable of coping with a dynamic change in data attributes and a re-synchronizing process while increases in required memory capacity and bus transmission capacity are suppressed as much as possible.

5 According to the present invention, received audio data that contains a plurality of coded sample data are grouped into one block; control information relating to attribute is added to the data of each block; the control information added data of each block is temporarily stored
10 and then output.

Other objects and features of this invention will become apparent from the following description with reference to the accompanying drawings.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing a structure of a audio video decoding apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing a detailed structure
20 of an audio signal converter shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a schematic diagram showing a structure of PCM audio data to be output from a CPU shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a key diagram showing a structural example of control information;

25 Fig. 5 is a schematic diagram showing a format example

of control information;

Fig. 6 is a schematic diagram showing another format example of control information;

Fig. 7 is a block diagram showing a structure of a conventional audio decoding apparatus;

Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram showing a structure of a general multi-channel audio data string; and

Fig. 9 is a schematic diagram showing a structure of PCM audio data to be output from a conventional audio decoding apparatus.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Embodiments of a method of and an apparatus for decoding audio data according to the present invention will be explained below with reference to accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing a structure of an audio video decoding apparatus according to one embodiment of the present invention. This audio video decoding apparatus 10 is provided with the front end section 11, stream interface section 12, CPU 13, video decoder 14, video display interface section 15, synchronous dynamic semiconductor storage device (hereinafter, SDRAM) 16, and audio signal converting section 17.

The front end section 11 reads an A/V signal to be given from a recording medium such as DVD or data

communication, and executes a signal process such as error
correction. The stream interface section 12 receives a
signal from the front end section 11, and converts this signal
into bit-length data which are easily subject to the decoding
5 process.

The CPU 13 receives data from the stream interface
section 12, and executes a stream separating process for
separating the data into video stream data and audio stream
data, or a hardware operation timing control process.
10 Further, this CPU 13 decodes the separated audio stream data
and adds control information, mentioned later, to the PCM
audio data which were subject to the decoding process.

The video decoder 14 receives the video stream data
separated in the CPU 13 and decodes them. The video display
15 interface section 15 receives video data which are decoded
in the video decoder 14, and outputs them to a digital NTSC/PAL
encoder 20.

The SDRAM 16 operates as a buffer of PCM audio data
and as an elementary stream buffer of video data. The PCM
20 audio data and the video data are given via a SDRAM interface
section 18.

The audio signal converting section 17 receives PCM
audio data from the SDRAM 16, and outputs the PCM audio data
to audio D/A converters 30a, 30b and 30c and an digital audio
25 interface receiver 40 based on the control information (audio

serial data output and digital audio interface output). As shown in Fig. 2, the audio signal converting section 17 of the present embodiment is constituted so as to have an input section 171, a control information analyzing section 172 and an output control section 173. The input section 171 receives the PCM audio data to be given from the SDRAM 16, and separates the PCM audio data into PCM audio data itself and control information. The control information analyzing section 172 analyzes control information to be given from the input section 171, and gives a control signal to the output section based on the analyzed result. The output control section 173 converts the PCM audio data from the input section 171 properly based on the control signal from the control information analyzing section 172 and outputs the data.

In the structure of the above audio video decoding apparatus 10, the CPU 13 corresponds with the decoding section, and the SDRAM 16 and the interface section correspond to the storage section, and the audio signal converting section 17 corresponds to the output section.

Fig. 3 shows a structure of the PCM audio data to be output from the CPU 13 according to the present embodiment. Similarly to Fig. 8, Fig. 3 exemplifies the data structure in the case of Dolby AC-3 6-channel output. In Fig. 3, sample data are composed of PCM audio data which of respective

channels are output at the same time. Therefore, in Dolby AC-3 6-channel, one sample data is composed of six PCM audio data. A plurality of sample data form an audio frame. A number of sample data for one audio frame (audio frame length) is determined by an audio decoding method, and for example, in the case of Dolby AC-3, one audio frame is composed of 1536 sample data.

As is clear from Fig. 3, in the above audio video decoding apparatus 10, when PCM audio data are output from the CPU 13, a plurality of sample data are blocked (i.e. grouped into blocks), and the above-mentioned control information is added to the respective blocked sample data.

The control information represents attributes of a plurality of blocked sample data, and as shown in Fig. 4, for example, it includes output control instruction information, output channel number information, output sample number information, down sample instruction information, data output word length information, output channel structure information, distribution specifying information and the like.

The output instruction information is for instructing as to whether or not outputs of the sample blocks can be started/stopped, and in Fig. 5, it corresponds to c bit. In the audio signal converting section 17, if the output instruction information is included in the control

information, a judgment is made as to whether or not the
outputs can be started/stopped so that the sample data output
operation timing can be controlled. Therefore, even if,
for example, an error occurs, the output operation can be
5 restarted by using the sample block including the output
instruction information as a re-synchronizing point, and
sound information and image information can be
re-synchronized very easily without initializing all the
CPU 13, the SDRAM 16 and the audio signal converting section
10 17.

The output channel number information is for showing
a number of channels to which data are output for one sample
data, namely, a number of PCM data to be read from the SDRAM
16 for one sample data. In Fig. 5, this information
15 corresponds to ch_num. In the audio signal converting
section 17, if the output channel number information is
included in the control information, a number of the PCM
audio data to be read and output from the SDRAM 16 for one
sample data can be recognized. As a result, even if a number
20 of the output channels changes dynamically, the output can
cope with this situation. Furthermore, since the audio
signal converting section 17 can recognize a number of the
PCM audio data to be read and output from the SDRAM 16, a
reading control mechanism or the like of the SDRAM 16 can
25 be simplified.

The output sample number information is information for showing a number of blocked samples, and in Fig. 5, it corresponds to sample_num. In the audio signal converting section 17, if the output sample number information is included in the control information, a number of samples in the sample blocks can be recognized. As a result, a data length of the sample blocks is calculated based on the output channel number information if necessary, and the control information can be detected securely. As a result, even if a number of sample data in the sample blocks and a number of output channels for one sample change dynamically, the output can cope with this situation.

The down sample instruction information is for instructing as to whether or not down sampling is executed, and in Fig. 5, it corresponds to dw bit. The audio signal converting section 17 is in the audio video decoding apparatus 10 which can output both audio serial data and digital audio interface. In this case, sampling frequencies f_s of both the outputs are occasionally different from each other. For example, if the sampling frequency of audio serial data is 96 KHz and that of digital audio interface is 48 KHz, it is necessary to 1/2 down-sample PCM audio data of the digital audio interface output, and a number of the PCM audio data read from the SDRAM 16 for one sample changes. In the above-mentioned audio signal converting

section 17, if the down sample instruction information is included in the control information, even if the sampling frequency of the digital audio interface output, for example, changes dynamically and down sample changes, a number of the PCM audio data read from the SDRAM 16 is calculated based on the down sample instruction information so that this audio signal converting section 17 can cope with this situation.

The data output word length information is for representing an output word length of the PCM audio data, and it corresponds to bitlen in Fig. 5. In the audio signal converting section 17, if the data output word length information is included in the control information, even if the output word length of the PCM audio data changes dynamically, the shift operation timing at the time of output is changed based on the data output word length information so that the audio signal converting section 17 can cope with this situation. In general, if the output word length of the PCM audio data changes dynamically, a method of changing the output word length of the PCM audio data itself output from the CPU 13 is considered. However, in this case, a shift operation is required for the PCM audio data once generated, and thus a processing amount of the CPU 13 increases remarkably. On the contrary, if the output word length of the PCM audio data is changed in the audio signal converting section 17 as mentioned above, the audio signal

converting section 17 can cope with this situation by changing the shift operation timing at the time of output without adding special hardware. For this reason, a processing amount in the CPU 13 can be reduced.

5 Further, as for the data output word length information, if the audio serial data output and the digital audio interface output are executed, a field is provided to bitlen and both the information is held. As a result, even if the output word lengths are different from each other in the
10 same sample data, this problem can be solved.

 The output channel structure information is for representing an order of the PCM audio data in one sample data. The distribution specifying information is for specifying internal distribution in the PCM audio data. In
15 Fig. 5, the output channel structure information and the distribution specifying information correspond to ch-asgn slot 1 through 8. In this example, the slot numbers of the channel structure information are fixed. The CPU 13 sets an output order of the PCM audio data in one sample data
20 as the output channel structure information, and outputs the PCM audio data in respective sample data according to the output order. If a slot number of the channel structure is smaller than a number of the PCM audio data in one sample data, information showing unused is set in slots not to be
25 used. For example, in the case of 6-channel output, as for

the channel structure information, slot1 through slot6 are set as L, R, C. Lfe, Ls and Rs, and slot7 and slot8 are set as unused. The PCM audio data output from the CPU 13 are output in an order of L, R, C. Lfe, Ls and Rs per sample data. The PCM audio data are read from the SDRAM 16 based on the ch_num value for each sample data in the audio signal converting section 17, and the PCM audio data are distributed to corresponding channels in such a manner that the first PCM audio data is distributed to L channel according to the slot 1 information, the second PCM audio data is distributed to R channel according to the slot 2 information and on. If internal distribution specification exists, this is also executed. For example, if the PCM audio data for L and R are output to the digital audio interface output, information showing distribution to the digital audio interface output is added to slot 1 and slot 2, whereas the first PCM audio data is distributed to L channel and also to the digital audio interface output in the audio signal converting section 17.

20 In the audio signal converting section 17, if the output channel structure information is included in the control information, since the channel structure which outputs the PCM audio data can be recognized, the audio signal converting section can cope with a case where the output channel structure changes dynamically. Moreover, if the

distribution instruction information is included in the control information, in the audio signal converting section 17, one PCM audio data can be distributed to a plurality of output channels. Therefore, in the case of, for example,
5 an audio serial data output and a digital audio interface output at the time of 2-channel output, namely, the same PCM audio data are output to a plurality of output channels, one PCM data can be eliminated from the CPU 13, and required memory capacity and bus transmission capacity can be further
10 reduced.

In the above example, the slot number of the channel structure information is fixed, but it can be varied according to the output channels. If the slot number of the channel structure is variable, as shown in Fig. 6, the
15 slot number specifying information is added to the channel structure information, and pieces of the channel structure information which accords with the set slot number may be set. For example, if the slot number is 2, the channel structure information is composed of the slot number
20 specifying information in which the slot number is set two, and the channel structure information of slot 1 and slot 2. In the audio signal converting section 17, a boundary between the control information and the PCM audio data is recognized by the slot number specifying information, and
25 the output channels of the PCM audio data are set based on

the information of slot 1 and slot 2.

As explained above, according to the present embodiment, since various control information is added when the PCM audio data are output from the CPU 13, the invention
5 can cope with the dynamic change in data attributes and the re-synchronizing process. Further, in the present embodiment, a plurality of sample data are blocked and the control information is added to the blocked sample data respectively. For this reason, an increase in data amount
10 accompanied by the addition of the control information is very small, and the increases in the memory capacity and bus transmission capacity can be suppressed as much as possible.

A number of sample data to which the control information
15 is added is an arbitrary plural number. This is because the attributes such as the output channel structure does not frequently change in a unit of a sample, and there is a good possibility that the attributes of a plurality of PCM audio data are the same. Moreover, as frequency that
20 sample data whose output can be controlled appear increases more, the sound information and the image information can be combined more finely at the time of the re-synchronizing process. However, an output period of the one audio sample data is very smaller than one screen output period of a video.
25 Therefore, it is not necessary to add the control information

to each one sample data and thus there arises no problem even if the control information is added to one of plural sample data.

As the typical sample block, it is considered that,
5 for example, one audio frame unit is sufficient on the system structure. Since the control information to be added shows only an attribute in the sample block, it can be composed of about several bytes. Therefore, if one audio frame is a sample block, in the structure of Fig. 3, the PCM audio
10 data are 27 K bytes, and the control information is several bytes. As a result, this sample block can be suppressed to about 3/4 in comparison with the conventional one (Fig. 9).

Actually, the attributes are not changed frequently
15 even in audio frame unit, and the same attributes continue in overwhelmingly many occasions. For this reason, it is not always necessary to add the control information in one audio frame unit. For example, a judgment is made as to whether or not an attribute change in sample number unit
20 preset in the CPU 13 (for example, one audio frame unit) exists and output control is necessary. When the judgment is made that both of them are not necessary, namely, that the control information is common, the control information is added to the one audio frame unit as one sample block.
25 As a result, the increases in the memory capacity and the

bus transmission capacity required as the SDRAM 16 can be suppressed further. In this case, sizes of the sample blocks are not necessarily fixed, but the sizes of the sample blocks may be different from one another suitably. Even if the
5 sizes of the sample blocks are different from one another, the audio signal converting section 17 can cope with this situation based on the output sample number information. Therefore, there arises no problem.

As mentioned above, according to the method of this
10 invention, since the control information relating to attributes is added to a plurality of blocked sample data, the increases in the required memory capacity and bus transmission capacity are suppressed as much as possible, and simultaneously the invention can cope with the dynamic
15 change of data attributes and the re-synchronizing process.

According to the apparatus of this invention, since the control information relating to attributes is added to a plurality of blocked sample data, the increases in the required memory capacity and bus transmission capacity are
20 suppressed as much as possible, and simultaneously the invention can cope with the dynamic change of data attributes and the re-synchronizing process.

Furthermore, since the control information relating to attributes are added to a plurality of sample data in
25 frame data unit, the increases in the required memory

capacity and bus transmission capacity are suppressed as much as possible, and simultaneously the invention can cope with the dynamic change of data attributes and the re-synchronizing process.

5 Furthermore, since a plurality of sample data whose attributes are equal are blocked and the control information relating to attributes are added to them, the increases in the required memory capacity and bus transmission capacity are suppressed as much as possible, and simultaneously the
10 invention can cope with the dynamic change of data attributes and the re-synchronizing process.

 Furthermore, since the control information including the information for instructing sample data whose output can be controlled is added to the blocked data, a judgment
15 is made as to whether or not the output section can start/stop output so that the sample data output operation timing can be controlled.

 Furthermore, since the control information including the channel number information to be output for one sample
20 data is added to blocked data, the present invention can cope with a case where the output channel number for one sample data changes dynamically. Further, the output section can recognize a number of the PCM audio data read and output from the storage section, the reading control
25 mechanism or the like of the storage section can be

simplified.

Furthermore, since the control information including the sample data number information of blocked data is added to the blocked data, the present invention can cope with
5 a case where the output channel number for one sample data changes dynamically.

Furthermore, since the control information including the information for specifying down sample is added to blocked data, the output control can cope with a case where
10 a sampling frequency changes dynamically and down sample is changed in such a manner that a number of the PCM audio data read from the storage section is changed.

Furthermore, since the control information including the information for specifying a data output word length is added to the blocked data, the present invention can cope
15 with a case where the output word length changes dynamically. Further, since the output section can cope with the change in the output word length, a processing amount of the decoding section does not increase.

Furthermore, since the control information including the information for specifying a plurality of data output word lengths is added to blocked data, the present invention
20 can cope with a case where a plurality of output word lengths exist in one sample data.

Furthermore, since the control information including
25

information for specifying an output channel structure is added to blocked data, the present invention can cope with a case where the output channel structure changes dynamically.

5 Furthermore, since the control information including information for specifying an output channel structure whose slot number is fixed is added to blocked data, the present invention can cope with a case where the output channel structure whose slot number is fixed changes dynamically.

10 Furthermore, since the control information including information for specifying an output channel structure whose slot number is variable according to output channels is added to blocked data, the present invention can cope with a case where the output channel structure whose slot number is
15 variable changes dynamically.

 Furthermore, since the control information including information for specifying internal data distribution of an output audio function is added to blocked data, one PCM audio data can be output to a plurality of output channels
20 in the output section. If, for example, the same PCM audio data are output to a plurality of output channels, one PCM audio data may be output from the decoding section.

 Although the invention has been described with respect to a specific embodiment for a complete and clear disclosure,
25 the appended claims are not to be thus limited but are to

be construed as embodying all modifications and alternative constructions that may occur to one skilled in the art which fairly fall within the basic teaching herein set forth.